A DISCOURSE ON THE MIRACLES OF OUR *SAVIOUR*,

In View of the Present Controverſy between INFIDELS and APOSTATES.

—Noſtrum eſt tantas componere Lites.

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By THOMAS WOOLSTON, B. D.
Sometime Fellow of *Sidney-College* in *Cambridge*.

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DISCOURSE

OF THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR.

To The

Right Reverend Father in GOD,

EDMUND,

Lord Biſhop of LONDON.

My Lord,

UPON no other View do I make a Dedication of this Diſcourſe to your Lordſhip, *than to ſubmit it to your acute Judgment, expecting ſoon to hear of your Approbation or Diſlike of it. If it ſo happen, that you highly approve of it, I beg of you to be ſparing of your Commendations, leſt I ſhould be puff'd up with them.*

In my Moderator, *ſome Expreſſions dropt from my Pen about the Miracles of our Saviour, which for want of Illuſtration then, gave your* Lordſhip *ſome Offence, and brought upon me more Trouble: But, having now fully and clearly explained my ſelf out of the Fathers, I hope you'll be reconciled to me; and as you are a Lover of Truth, will, againſt Intereſt and Prejudice, yield to the Force of it.*

Whether your Proſecution of me, for the Moderator, *was juſt and reaſonable, I'll not diſpute here, having already expoſtulated that Matter with you in ſeveral* Letters, *to which you would not condeſcend to give me any Anſwer. For what Reaſon you was ſilent, is beſt known to your ſelf. But, in my own Vindication, I hope, I may publiſh without Offence, that your taking me for an* Infidel, *was*

ſuch

ſuch a Miſtake, as I thought no Scholar *could have made; and the Injury done to my Reputation and low Fortune, by the Proſecution, ſo conſiderable, that the leaſt I expected from your* Lordſhip, *was a courteous Excuſe, if not an ample Compenſation, for it.*

As to the Expediency of proſecuting Infidels *for their Writings (in whoſe Cauſe I am the fartheſt of any Man from being engaged) I will here ſay nothing. The Argument,* pro *and* con, *has already, by one or other, been copiouſly handled. And I don't know, but I might be, with your* Lordſhip, *on the perſecuting Side of the Queſtion; but that it looks as if a Man was diſtruſtful of the Truth of Chriſtianity, and conſcious of his own Inability to defend it; or he would leave that* good Cauſe *to God himſelf, and the Sword of the Spirit, without calling upon*

upon the Civil Magiſtrate *for his Aid and Aſſiſtance.*

That ſcurvy Writer *of the* Scheme of literal Prophecy, &c. *which your* Lordſhip *muſt have heard of, would inſinuate, that they are only atheiſtical* Prieſts, *who for fear of their Intereſts in the Church, ſet Perſecutions on foot: But after your* Lordſhip *has publiſh'd a ſtrenuous* Defence *of Chriſtianity to the Purpoſe of our preſent Controverſy, I'll have no ſuch Suſpicions of you.*

Your Lordſhip's *perſecuting* (or, *if you will, proſecuting*) *Humour, is reputedly all pure Zeal for God's Glory; and, with all my Heart, let it be ſo accounted, whether it be according to Knowledge or not. Againſt Popery and Infidelity you are all Ardency! Who does not commend you? Who can queſtion the Sincerity of the Zeal of a*

Pro-

Proteſtant Biſhop, *and of a Proteſtant* Clergy, *when they perſecute the Enemies of their Church, that conſiders their own Steadineſs to Principles againſt Intereſt, under all Changes, ſince the Reformation; and their Abhorrence of Extortion on the People, for the Duties of their Function, in and about this City. Such Honeſty and Conſtancy in their Profeſſion, is a Proof of the Integrity of their Hearts, or I know not where to find one.*

But that your Lordſhip's *Zeal for Religion is very remarkable and ſucceſsful, I could prove by many Inſtances; one is,* that *of your routing a turbulent Sect of* Peripateticks *out of St.* Paul's *Cathedral; and if you could as effectually clear* Chriſt's *Church of* Infidels, *what a glorious Biſhop would you be!*

And

And what Pity it is, that Infidels *likewiſe are not to be quell'd with your Threats and Terrors! which (without the Weapons of ſharp Reaſonings, and thumping Arguments, that others are for the Uſe of) would tranſmit your Fame to Poſterity, for a notable Champion for Chriſtianity, as certainly as, that your judicious Proſecution of the* Moderator *for Infidelity is here remember'd by,*

MY LORD,

The Admirer of

London, April 17th 1727.

Your Zeal,

Wiſdom and

Conduct,

Thomas Woolſton.



A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR, &c.

IF ever there was an uſeful Controverſy ſtarted, or revived in this Age of the Church, it is *this* about the *Meſſiahſhip* of the holy Jeſus, which the *Diſcourſe of the Grounds*, &c. has of late rais'd. I believe this Controverſy will end in the abſolute Demonſtration of *Jeſus*'s *Meſſiahſhip* from Prophecy, which is the only Way to prove him to be the

Meſſiah,

Meſſiah, that great Prophet expected by the *Jews*, and promiſed under the Old Teſtament. And tho' this Way of Proof from Prophecy ſeems to labour under many Difficulties at preſent; and tho' ſome *Writers* againſt the *Grounds*, being diſtreſs'd with thoſe Difficulties, are for ſeeking Refuge in the Miracles of our Saviour; yet we muſt perſiſt in it, till, what I have no doubt of, his *Meſſiahſhip* ſhall be clearly made out by it.

And the Way in Prophecy that I would take for the Proof of *Jeſus*'s *Meſſiahſhip*, ſhould be by an allegorical Interpretation and Application of the Law and the Prophets to him; the very ſame Way, that all the Fathers of the Church have gone in; and the very ſame Way, in which all the ancient *Jews* ſay their *Meſſiah* was to fulfil the Law and the Prophets: But this Way does not pleaſe our eccleſiaſtical *Writers* in this Controverſy, neither will they at preſent give any Ear to it.

The Way in Prophecy that they are for taking, is by a literal Interpretation and Application of ſome Prophecies of the Old Teſtament to our *Jeſus*; but they are hitherto unſucceſsful in this Way. The Authors of the *Grounds* and of the *Scheme*, grievouſly perplex them with their Objections againſt this Way of Proof, ſo far as, being

being ſenſible, I ſay, of almoſt inſuperable Difficulties in it, they are flying apace to the Miracles of our Saviour, as to their ſole and grand Refuge.

But to ſhew that there's no Sanctuary for them in the Miracles of our Saviour, I write this *Diſcourſe*: And this I do, not for the Service of Infidelity, which has no Place in my Heart, but for the Honour of the Holy *Jeſus*, and to reduce the *Clergy* to the good old Way of interpreting Prophecies, which the Church has unhappily apoſtatis'd from, and which, upon the Teſtimony of the Fathers, will, one Day, be the Converſion of *Jews* and *Gentiles*.

For this Opinion, that there is no Sanctuary in the Miracles of our Saviour, I chanc'd to ſay in the *Moderator*, (1) *That Jeſus's Miracles, as they are now-a-days underſtood, make nothing for his Authority and Meſſiahſhip.* And again, (2) *That I believe, upon good Authority, ſome of the Miracles of Jeſus, as recorded by the Evangeliſts, were never wrought, but are only related as prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what will be myſteriouſly and more wonderfully done by him:* Which Expreſſions gave Offence to ſome of our *Clergy*, and brought upon me their

(1) Page 44. (2) Page 53.

Indignation and Diſpleaſure. I ſee no Reaſon to depart from the ſaid Expreſſions, or ſo much as to palliate and ſoften them, much leſs to retract them; but in Maintenance of my Opinion, to the Honour of our *Meſſiah*, and the Defence of Chriſtianity, I write this Treatiſe on *Jeſus*'s Miracles, and take this Method following.

I. I will ſhew, that the Miracles of healing all manner of bodily Diſeaſes, which *Jeſus* was juſtly famed for, are none of the proper Miracles of the *Meſſiah*, neither are they ſo much as a good Proof of his Divine Authority to found a Religion.

II. That the literal Hiſtory of many of the Miracles of *Jeſus*, as recorded by the Evangeliſts, does imply Abſurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities; conſequently they, either in whole or in part, were never wrought, as they are commonly believed now-a-days, but are only related as prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what would be myſteriouſly and more wonderfully done by him.

III. I ſhall conſider what *Jeſus* means, when he appeals to his Miracles as to a Teſtimony and Witneſs of his Divine Authority, and ſhew, that he could not properly

perly and ultimately refer to thoſe he then wrought in the *Fleſh*, but to thoſe myſtical ones, which he would do in the *Spirit*; of which thoſe wrought in the Fleſh are but mere Types and Shadows.

In treating on theſe Heads, I ſhall not confine myſelf only to Reaſon, but alſo to the expreſs Authority of the Fathers, thoſe holy, venerable, and learned Preachers of the Goſpel in the firſt Ages of the Church; who took our Religion from the Hands of the Apoſtles, and of apoſtolical Men, who dy'd, ſome of them, and ſuffer'd for the Doctrine they taught; who profeſſedly and confeſſedly were endu'd with divine and extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit; who conſequently can't be ſuppoſed to be Corrupters of Chriſtianity, or Teachers of falſe Notions about the Miracles of our Saviour, or ſo much as miſtaken about the apoſtolical and evangelical Senſe and Nature of them. I know not how it comes to paſs, but I am a profound Admirer, and an almoſt implicit Believer of the Authority of the Fathers, whom I look upon as vaſt Philoſophers, very great Scholars, and moſt orthodox Divines. Whatever they concurrently aſſert, I firmly believe. And tho' they are, for the moſt part, myſterious Writers out of the Reach of the

Capacities

Capacities of many, who ſlight them; yet I, who have had the Honour and Happineſs of much of their Acquaintance, fancy my ſelf well appriſed of their Meanings. If at any Time I read a Paſſage in them which I don't preſently apprehend, I ſalute it with Veneration for all that, till my Underſtanding is open'd to receive the Senſe of it. If I meet with but a ſingle Opinion in any one of them, I pay my Reſpects to it; but where there is an Harmony and Agreement of Opinion amongſt them, it is with me, and ought to be with all Chriſtians, of ſuch Weight, as to bear down all Prejudice, Oppoſition, and Contradiction before it; or the Authority of no Man, whether ancient or modern, is to have any Regard paid to it; and of what ill Conſequence to Religion ſuch an utter Rejection of Authority will be, I need not ſay.

This I thought fit to premiſe, concerning the Authority of the Fathers, to abate of the Prejudice beforehand, which ſome may conceive againſt the following *Diſcourſe* about the Miracles of *Jeſus*. I don't queſtion, but ſome may be ſtartled at the foregoing Heads, as if, what is the fartheſt of any thing from my Heart, the Service of Infidelity was in View; but craving the Temper and Patience of ſuch Readers for a while,

a while, and they ſhall find, that it's no other than juſt Reaſoning, clear Truth, and primitive Doctrine about *Jeſus*'s Miracles, that I advance: Or if it ſhould ſo happen, that none beſides my ſelf ſhould diſcern the Reaſoning and Truth of the Argument; yet I hope it will not be thought a Crime to revive primitive Doctrine, which none will be able to deny it to be, whether they like it or not. If I err, I err upon Choice with the Fathers, of whoſe Faith I am. And if any are offended at what follows about the Miracles of *Chriſt*, let them turn their Diſpleaſure and Indignation againſt the Fathers, for whoſe expreſs or implicit Opinions I can be deſerving of no Blame.

I am ſorry for the Occaſion of ſuch a Preface againſt Offence, which the Apoſtacy of the Age, and its Unacquaintedneſs with the Fathers, has made neceſſary. So I enter upon the particular handling of the Heads foregoing. And

I. I will ſhew, that the Miracles of healing all manner of bodily Diſeaſes, which *Jeſus* was juſtly famed for, are none of the proper Miracles of the Meſſiah, nor are they ſo much as a good Proof of *Jeſus*'s divine Authority to found and introduce a Religion into the World.

And

And to do this, let us conſider, firſt, in general, what was the Opinion of the Fathers about the Writings of the *Evangeliſts*, in which the Life of *Chriſt* is recorded. *Eucherius* ſays, (3) *That the Scriptures of the New as well as Old Teſtament, are to be interpreted in an allegorical Senſe.* And this his Opinion, is no other than the common one of the firſt Ages of the Church, as might be proved by many the like Expreſſions of other Fathers. As in ſuch Expreſſions, they do not except the Writings of the *Evangeliſts*; ſo they muſt include the Hiſtory of *Chriſt*'s Miracles, which as well as other Parts of the Hiſtory of his Life, is to be allegoriz'd for the Sake of its true Meaning; conſequently the literal Story of Chriſt's Miracles proves nothing.

But let's hear particularly their Opinion of the Actions and Miracles of our Saviour. *Origen* ſays, that (4) *Whatſoever Jeſus did in the Fleſh, was but typical and ſymbolical of what he would do in the*

(3) Univerſam porro Sacram Scripturam tam Novi quam Veteris Teſtamenti ad allegoricum ſenſum eſſe ſumendam, admonet nos vel illud, Aperiam os meum in Parabolis. *In Praſat. ad Form Spirit. Intell.*

(4) Si quidem Symbola quædam erant quæ tunc gerebantur eorum, quæ Jeſu virtute ſemper perficiuntur. *In Mat.* C. XV.

Spirit;

Spirit; and to our Purpoſe, (5) that *the ſeveral bodily Diſeaſes which he healed, were no other than Figures of the ſpiritual Infirmities of the Soul, that are to be cured by him.* St. *Hilary* is of the ſame Mind with *Origen*, as any one may ſee by the (6) Expreſſions referr'd to, and his Commentary on St. *Matthew*. St. *Auguſtin* (7), and St. *John* (8) of *Jeruſalem*, both ſay, that the Works of *Jeſus* import farther Myſteries; and with them, the reſt of the Fathers agree, making the Miracles that *Jeſus* did then, no more than the Shadow of ſome more powerful and myſtical Operations to be done by him, as I could ſhew by more Citations out of them, if it were needful. But from the foregoing Citations out of the Fathers it is plain, in their Opinion, that our modern *Divines* are in the wrong of it, to lay much Streſs on any of the Operations of *Jeſus*, which

(5) Omnis Languor & omnis Infirmitas quam ſanavit Salvator tunc in Populo referuntur ad Infirmitates ſpirituales Animarum, *&c.* *In* Mat. *C.* xvii.

(6) Chriſti Geſta aliud portendunt. *In* Mat. *C.* xii. Evangelicis geſtis eſt interior Senſus, *C.* xiv. Hæc licet in præſens geſta ſunt, quid tamen in futurum ſignificent contuendum eſt, *C.* x. Peragunt formam futuri geſta præſentia, *C.* xxi.

(7) Quæ a Jeſu facta ſunt, alicujus ſignificantia erant. *Serm.* 77.

(8) Omnia quod fecit Jeſus, Sacramenta ſunt, *Homil.* 31. *in* Marc. 9.

he did in the Fleſh, for the Proof of his divine Authority and *Meſſiahſhip*, which is only to be proved by his more myſterious Works, of which thoſe done in the Fleſh are but Type and Figure.

But to come cloſer to the Purpoſe, let's ſee how indifferently, I had almoſt ſaid contemptibly, the Fathers ſpeak of the Miracles of *Jeſus*, and particularly of his Power of healing all bodily Diſeaſes, which by modern *Writers* is ſo much magnified and extoll'd. St. *Iræneus* ſays (9), that if *we conſider only the then temporal Uſe of Jeſus's Power of Healing, he did nothing grand and powerful*; conſequently, *Irenæus* could not hold, that *Jeſus*'s Miracles then wrought, were a ſufficient Proof of his divine Authority, much leſs of his *Meſſiahſhip*. *Origen* ſays (10) that *tho' many were brought to believe in Jeſus upon the Fame of the Miracles which he did once among the* Jews, *yet* (what implies the Inſufficiency of them for the Converſion of Men) *he intimates that his greater and myſtical Works do prove his Authority*. St. *John* of *Jeruſalem* ſays, (11) that *Je-*

(9) Si enim temporalis erat ab eo Utilitas, nihil grande præſtitit iis, qui ab eo curati ſunt, *L.* V. *C.* 12. *S.* 6.

(10) Contra Celſum, *L.* 11.

(11) Cœcum curavit, magnum quidem eſt, quod fecit; ſed niſi quotidie fiat, quod olim factum, nobis quidem magnum eſſe ceſſavit. *Homil.* 30. *in* Marc. 9.

ſus's

ſus's Cures performed upon the Blind, &c. were indeed conſiderable and great; but unleſs he do daily as mighty Works in his Church, we ought to forbear our Admiration of him. St. *Auguſtin* not only ſays, (12) that *if we examine into Jeſus's Miracles by humane Reaſon, we ſhall find he did nothing great, conſidering his Almighty Power, and conſidering his Goodneſs, what he did was but little;* but he tells us alſo, that (13) *ſuch Works as Jeſus did, might be imputed to, and effected by Magic Art.* And accordingly *Moſes* and our Saviour himſelf confeſs, that falſe Prophets, and falſe Chriſts, will do Miracles; and *Anti-Chriſt* himſelf, according to St. *Paul*, will do them to the Deception of Mankind. Nay, the Fathers (14) ſay, what I believe, that *Anti-Chriſt* will imitate and equal *Jeſus* in all his Miracles which he wrought of old. How then can we diſtinguiſh the true Prophet from the falſe, the true *Chriſt* from the *Anti-Chriſt* by Miracles? Our *Divines*

(12) Si humano captu & ingenio conſideremus Jeſum facientem, & quod ad poteſtatem non magnum aliquid fecit, & quod ad benignitatem, parvum fecit. *In* Johan. *Cap.* V. *Tract.* 17.

(13) Etſi atteſtabantur Miracula, non defuiſſent (ſicut & nunc muſſitant) qui magicæ potentiæ cuncta illa tribuerent. *Cont. Fauſt. L.* XII. *C.* 45.

(14) *Vid.* Sanctum *Auguſtinum* de *Anti-chriſto.*

will find it hard to do it, if what the Fathers ſay of *Anti-Chriſt* be found true. Moreover, Hiſtory affords us Inſtances of Men, ſuch as of *Apollonius Tyanæus*, *Veſpaſian*, and of the *Iriſh Stroaker*, *Greatrex*, who have miraculouſly cured Diſeaſes to the Admiration of Mankind, as well as our *Jeſus*: But if any of them, or any other greater Worker of Miracles than they were, ſhould withal aſſume to himſelf the Title of a Prophet, and Author of a new Religion, I humbly conceive, we ought not to give heed to him.

Neither is there the leaſt Reaſon that we ſhould; for the Power of doing Miracles is no certain, nor rational Seal of the Commiſſion and Authority of a divine Lawgiver. St. *Paul* ſays (15) there is a *Diverſity of the Gifts of the Spirit; for to one is given by the Spirit, the Word of Wiſdom; to another the Word of Knowledge; to another the Gift of Healing; to another the working of Miracles; to another Prophecy; to another Diſcerning of Spirits; to another divers Kinds of Tongues; to another the Interpretation of Tongues.* Theſe Gifts may be given apart and ſeparately. One of them may be confer'd on this Man, and another of

(15) 1 *Cor.* C. xii.

them

them on his Neighbour. There is no Neceſſity that any two or more of theſe Gifts ſhould meet in one Man. To argue then, that a Man, who has one of theſe Gifts, muſt have the other; that is, that he muſt needs have the Gift of Wiſdom, or of Prophecy, or of Diſcerning of Spirits, or of divers Kinds of Tongues, becauſe he has the Gift of Healing and of working Miracles, is very inconcluſive, and falſe Reaſoning: And yet this is the Reaſoning of our modern Writers, who would prove *Jeſus*'s Authority to found a Religion from his Miracles. I don't queſtion but *Jeſus* had all the foreſaid Gifts and Powers of the Spirit in a moſt ſuperlative Degree; but then it is unreaſonably inferr'd, for all that, that a Man, becauſe he of Certainty has ſome of them, muſt of conſequence have the other. St. *Auguſtin* (16) cautions us againſt being deceived into a good Opinion of a Man's Wiſdom, becauſe of his Power to do Miracles. And I think accordingly, that we may as well ſay, that the ſtrongeſt Man is the wiſeſt; or that a good Phyſician muſt needs be a good Caſuiſt; or that

(16) Atque illud ad Rem maxime pertineat, ne decipiamur tendentes ad Contemplationem Veritatis—Arbitrantes ibi eſſe inviſibilem ſapientiam, ubi Miraculum viſibile viderimus. *In Serm. Dom. in monte, Lib.* 2. *Sect.* 84.

the

the beſt Mathematician is the ableſt Stateſman, as that *Jeſus*, becauſe he was a Worker of Miracles, ſuch as his are, and a Healer of all manner of Diſeaſes, ought to be received as the Guide of our Conſciences, the Director of our Underſtandings, the Ruler of our Hearts, and the Author of a Religion.

What then will the Writers againſt the *Grounds* do to prove *Jeſus*'s Authority and *Meſſiahſhip* from his Miracles? Or how by his Miracles will they be able to diſtinguiſh him from an Impoſtor, a falſe Prophet, and the *Anti-Chriſt*? Why, they will ſay perhaps,

1. That beſides Greatneſs of Power, there was nothing but Goodneſs, Kindneſs, and Love to Mankind ſhewn in *Jeſus*'s Miracles. As to the Miracles of falſe Prophets and Impoſtors, if they be, many of them, of a kind and benevolent Aſpect; yet the *Devil*'s Foot, if we look well to it, will diſcover itſelf in ſome ludicrous and miſchievous Pranks: But *Jeſus*'s Miracles were all of a beneficent Nature; he went about doing good, healing all manner of Diſeaſes among the People, and did no Wrong to any one; which is a good Argument, they ſay, of his divine Authority, or God would not have ſuffer'd, nor the *Devil* have work'd ſuch a Teſtimony in Behalf

of

of it. On this Head our *Divines* are copious and rhetorical, and many notable and florid Harangues have they made on it. But In answer to them, they don't seem to have their Memories at hand, when they declaim at this rate. The Fathers, upon whose Authority I write, will tell such Orators, that *Jesus*, if his Miracles are to be understood in the literal Sense, did not only as fooliſh Things as any Impoſtor could do, but very injurious ones to Mankind. I ſhall not here inſtance in the ſeemingly fooliſh and injurious Things which *Jesus* did for Miracles, intending under the next Head to ſpeak to ſome of them: But they are ſuch, if literally true, as our *Divines* do believe, as are enough to turn our Stomachs againſt ſuch a Prophet; and enough to make us take him for a *Conjuror*, a *Sorcerer*, and a *Wizard*, rather than the *Meſſiah* and the Prophet of the moſt High God. But

2. To prove the *Meſſiahſhip* of the holy *Jesus* from his Miracles, our *Divines* urge the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament, ſuch as that of *Iſaiah*, C. xxxv. *V.* 5, 6. *Then the Eyes of the blind ſhall be opened, and the Ears of the Deaf ſhall be unſtopp'd; then ſhall the lame Man leap as the Hart, and the Tongue of the Dumb ſing*; and ſay that theſe Prophecies were accurately

accurately fulfill'd by our *Jeſus* in the ſeveral ſpecifical Cures of *Blindneſs*, *Deafneſs*, *Lameneſs*, and *Dumbneſs*, which he often perform'd upon one or other; and, inaſmuch as our Saviour ſeems to appeal to ſuch Prophecies, do conclude this his Accompliſhment of them, to be no leſs than a Demonſtration that he was the true *Meſſiah*, that great Prophet, who was to come into the World. To which I anſwer,

Firſt, That the Accompliſhment of Prophecies that can neither be given forth by human Foreſight, nor fulfill'd in a Counterfeit, are good Proofs of *Jeſus*'s *Meſſiahſhip*. But then, what ſhall we ſay, if others beſides *Jeſus* ſhould do the like Cures and Miracles? It is ſaid of *Anti-Chriſt*, and I believe it, that he will not only do all the Miracles that *Jeſus* did, but will appeal to the like Prophecies too. How then we are to diſtinguiſh the *true* Chriſt from the *falſe* Chriſt by Miracles and Prophecies in this Caſe, is the Queſtion which I leave with our *Divines* to conſider of an Anſwer to, againſt the Time that it is proved that *Anti-chriſt* does all thoſe Miracles which *Jeſus* in the Fleſh wrought. But

Secondly, The foreſaid Prophecies, and others mention'd in *Iſaiah*, neither were, nor could be Prophecies of the miraculous Cures of bodily Diſeaſes, which *Jeſus then* did.

did. And this may be made appear, not only from the Context of thoſe Prophecies which received then no Accompliſhment in *Jeſus*, who ought to have fulfill'd one Part of the Prophecy as well as the other, or is not to be taken for the Fulfiller of either, but from the Opinion of both *Jews* and *Fathers*, who adjourn the Accompliſhment of thoſe Prophecies to Chriſt's ſpiritual Advent. But

Thirdly, The Prophet *Iſaiah*, in the Place above cited, ſpeaks not of bodily Blindneſs, *&c.* which the *Meſſiah* is to heal, but of the ſpiritual Diſtempers of the Soul, metaphorically ſo called; as may be eaſily proved, not only from the Prophecies themſelves, but from the old *Jews*, who were allegorical Interpreters of thoſe Diſtempers, and from the ancient Fathers, (17) who ſo underſtood them. Conſequently our *Jeſus*'s healing of thoſe bodily Diſeaſes, was no proper Accompliſhment of thoſe Prophecies. It is true our Saviour, *Matt.* xi. 4, 5. ſeems to appeal

(17) Interim completur & Iſaiæ Prophetia non tantum in corporalibus, verum etiam in ſpiritualibus, *Origen. In Matt. Cap.* xv. Aperientur igitur oculi cæcorum, aures ſurdorum audient, nam qui quondam divinis ſermonibus rejectis myſticam Sanctorum Inſtitutionem recipere non ſtuduerunt, libenter eam admittent, S. *Cyril in* Loc. Iſ. *Vide & Sanctum Hieronymum in* Loc. Iſai.

to thoſe Prophecies, and to make his Cure of corporal Diſtempers an Accompliſhment of them: But he means not in the literal Senſe, that our *Divines* take him in, as I ſhall ſhew hereafter, when I come to conſider what *Jeſus* means, by appealing to his Works and Miracles, as bearing Witneſs of him.

Our *Divines* then may admire and adore *Jeſus* as much as they pleaſe for his Miracles of healing bodily Diſtempers, but I am for the ſpiritual *Meſſiah* that cures thoſe Diſtempers of the Soul, that metaphorically paſs under the Names of Blindneſs, Lameneſs, Deafneſs, *&c.* And the Cure of theſe ſpiritual Diſeaſes, is the proper and miraculous Work of the true *Meſſiah*; for the ſake of which, ſays (18) St. *Auguſtin*, *Jeſus* condeſcended to do thoſe *little* Miracles of healing bodily Diſtempers, which were but the Type and Shadow of his more ſtupendous Miracles of curing ſpiritual Diſeaſes. The Cure of ſpiritual Infirmities is a God-like (19) Work, above the Imitation of Man or of *Anti-chriſt*, infinitely

(18) Et nunc majores ſanitates operatur, propter quas non eſt dedignatus tunc exhibere illas minores. *In Serm.* 88.

(19) In quibus Spiritualibus maxime Chriſti Perſona eminet. *Auguſt. Quæſt.* 2. *in Lucam.*

more

more miraculous than the healing any bodily Diſtempers can be.

Whether our *Jeſus* be at this Day ſuch a ſpiritual *Meſſiah*, I leave to our *Divines* to conſider, with thoſe ſpiritual Diſtempers of the Church, that ſeem to want his miraculous Hand and Touch. The Fathers of the Church ſaid, that *Jeſus* was *in part* ſuch a ſpiritual *Meſſiah* in their time, and argued (20) his *Meſſiahſhip*, not from bodily Cures, but from his moſt miraculous Cures of the Diſeaſes of the Soul: But there was another and future Time, in which he would be ſuch a ſpiritual and glorious *Meſſiah* to the greateſt Perfection. In the mean while, no healing of corporal Diſtempers can prove *Jeſus* to be the *Meſſiah*, nor any other of his miraculous Works recorded in the *Evangeliſts*: So far from it, that

II. I ſhall prove that the literal Story of many of *Jeſus*'s Miracles, as they are recorded in the *Evangeliſts*, and commonly believed by Chriſtians, does imply Improbabilities and Incredibilities, and the groſſeſt Abſurdities, very diſhonourable to the

(20) Modo Caro cæca non aperit oculos Miraculo Domini, ſed cor cæcum aperit oculos Sermoni Domini. Modo non reſurgit mortale cadaver, ſed reſurgit anima quæ mortua jacebat in vivo Cadavere, &c. *Auguſt. Serm.* 88. *S.* 3.

Name of Chriſt; conſequently they, in whole or in part, were never wrought, but are only related as prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what would be myſteriouſly and more wonderfully done by him.

The reading of this Head will, I doubt not, ſtrike with Horror ſome of our ſqueamiſh *Divines*, who, notwithſtanding they will ſacrifice almoſt any Principles to their Intereſt, will not bear that our literal evangelical Hiſtory of ſuch renown'd Miracles ſhould be thus called in Queſtion, and contemptuouſly ſpoken of. What does this *Author* mean, will ſome ſay, thus to do Service to Atheiſm and Infidelity? Away with him! Our Indignation is moved againſt him! No Cenſure and Puniſhment can be too ſevere for ſuch Impiety, Profaneneſs, and Blaſphemy, as is aim'd at, and imply'd in this Propoſition.

To calm therefore the Spirits, and abate the Prejudices of ſuch Accuſers, I muſt proceed with the greater Caution, and with Reaſon and Authority well fortify myſelf before and behind, or I ſhall feel the Weight of the Diſpleaſure of our *Divines*, who are prepoſſeſs'd of the Belief of the literal Story of all *Jeſus*'s Miracles.

Before then I enter upon the particular Examination of any of his Miracles, I will premiſe

premiſe two or three general Aſſertions of the Fathers about them. And firſt *Origen* (21) ſays, that in the hiſtorical Part of the Scriptures, *There are ſome Things inſerted as Hiſtory, which were never tranſacted, and which it was impoſſible ſhould be tranſacted; and other Things, again, that might poſſibly be done, but were not.* This he aſſerts of the Writings of the *Evangeliſts*, as well as of the Old Teſtament, and gives many Inſtances to this Purpoſe. St. *Hilary* (22) ſays, *There are many hiſtorical Paſſages of the New Teſtament, that if they are taken literally, are contrary to Senſe and Reaſon, and therefore there is a Neceſſity of a myſtical Interpretation.* And St. *Auguſtin* (23) ſays, that *there are hidden Myſteries in the Works and Miracles of our Saviour, which if we incauti-*

(21) Hiſtoria Scripturæ interdum interſerit quædam vel minus geſta, vel quæ omnino geri non poſſunt; interdum quæ poſſunt geri, nec tamen geſta ſunt. *De Principiis*, Lib. 4.

(22) Multa ſunt, quæ non ſinunt nos ſimplici ſenſu dicta evangelica ſuſcipere. Interpoſitis enim nonnullis Rebus quæ ex Natura humani ſenſus ſibi contraria ſunt; Rationem quærere cœleſtis Intelligentiæ admonemur. *In Matt. L.* xx. *S.* 2.

(23) Evangelica Sacramenta in Chriſti factis ſignata omnibus non patent, & ea nonnulli minus diligenter interpretando afferunt plerumque pro ſalute Perniciem, & pro Cognitione Veritatis Errorem, *&c. De Quæſt. Diverſ. Quæſt.* 84.

ouſly

ouſly and literally interprets, we ſhall run into Errors, and make grievous Blunders. Of the ſame Mind are the reſt of the Fathers, as might be proved by expreſs or implicit Citations; but, ſtudying Brevity, I think the three Teſtimonies above enough to cool the Rage, and aſſwage the Prejudices of my Adverſaries againſt the Propoſition before us, which I come now to a particular Conſideration of; that is, to ſhew that the Story of many of *Jeſus*'s Miracles is literally abſurd, improbable, and incredible. And

1. To ſpeak to that Miracle of *Jeſus*'s *driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple*, which all the (24) four Evangeliſts make mention of.

I have read in ſome modern Author, whoſe Name does not occur to my Memory, that this was, in his Opinion, the moſt ſtupendous Miracle that *Jeſus* wrought. And, in truth, it was a moſt aſtoniſhing one, if literally true, and *Jeſus* muſt appear more than a Man, he muſt put on an awful and moſt majeſtick Countenance to effect it. It is hard to conceive, how any one in the Form of a Man, and of a de-

(24) *Matt.* xxi. *Mark* xi. *Luke* xix. *John* ii.

ſpiſed

ſpiſed one too (and we don't read that *Jeſus* chang'd his human Shape) with a Whip in his Hand, could execute ſuch a Work upon a great Multitude of People, who were none of his Diſciples, nor had any Regard for him. Suppoſing he could, by his divine Power, infuſe a *panick* Fear into the People, yet what was the Reaſon that he was ſo *eaten up* with Zeal againſt the Profanation of that Houſe, which he himſelf came to deſtroy, and which he permitted, I may ſay commanded, to be filthily polluted not long after. But not to form by my ſelf an Invective againſt the Letter of this Story, let's hear what the Fathers ſay to it.

Origen makes the whole but a (25) Parable. His allegorical Expoſitions of it, are frequent, and one time or other he gives us the myſtical Meaning of every Part of it. By the *Temple*, he underſtands the *Church*: By the *Sellers* in the Temple, he means ſuch *Preachers* who make Merchandize of the Goſpel, whom the Spirit of Chriſt, ſome time or other, would rid his Church of. He is ſo far from believing any thing of the Letter of this Story, that

(25) In Comment. in *Matt.* xxi.

he

he has form'd a (26) large Argument againſt it: The Subſtance of which is, that "if "*Jeſus* had attempted any ſuch thing, the "People would have reſiſted, and executed "their Revenge on him; if he had affected "it, the Merchants of the Temple might "have reproach'd him with Damage done "to their Wares, and would have juſtly "accuſed him of a Riot againſt Law and "Authority." Whether there is not Reaſon in this Argument of *Origen*, let any one judge.

(26) Porro qui curæ eſt accuratior Inquiſitio conſiderabit, an juxta dignitatem præſentis Vitæ erat, ut Jeſus rem talem auderet facere, extrudere videlicet Meacatorum Multitudinem, qui ad Diem feſtum aſcenderant, Diſtributuri boves ditioribus, & tanto populo oves mactandas per domus familiarium, quæ multorum millium complerent numerum; atque eos qui in rebus talibus gloriantes producturi erant in medio Columbas, quas multi empturi erant, ceu in Conventu celeberrimo convivaturi. Conſiderabit hic etiam, an Nummulariorum erat non accuſare Jeſum contumelioſe propter ſuas ipſorum effuſas pecunias & menſas ſubverſas. Quis autem flagello e funiculis verberatus & expulſus ab eo, qui penes eos habebatur viis, hunc adortus non inclamaſſet totis viribus ſeſe ulciſcens; cum præſertim haberet tantam multitudinem eorum, qui ſibi æque contumeliam fieri credebant, faventem ſibi adverſum Jeſum? Inſuper conſideremus, Dei filium funiculos ſumentem; ſibique flagellum tenentem ad extrudendum e templo, annon repræſentet præter audaciam & temeritatem, inordinatum etiam quiddam? In *Johan.* Tom. XI.

St. *Hilary*

St. *Hilary* is of the ſame Mind with *Origen*. He ſays that this Story is only a (27) Prefiguration of what will be done in Chriſt's Church upon another Occaſion. And he admoniſhes (28) us to ſearch into the profound and myſtical Import of every Part of it; particularly he hints that (29) by *the Seats of thoſe who ſell Doves*, may be underſtood the Pulpits of Preachers who make Sale of the Gifts of the Spirit, which is repreſented by a Dove. As to the Letter of the Story, he is plain enough, that there was no ſuch (30) Market kept in the Temple of *Jeruſalem*: And if any Hiſtorians beſides the *Evangeliſts* had aſſerted it, I know of none, who would have been ſo fooliſh as to believe that Oxen and Sheep and Goats were there ſold.

St. *Ambroſe* too is for the Myſtery, and againſt the Letter of this Story, ſaying, (31) what ſhould be the Reaſon that *Jeſus* ſhould

(27) Præfiguratio futurorum dictis præſentibus continetur, *In Matt.* xxi.

(28) Admonemur altius Verborum Virtutes in iſtiuſmodi ſignificationibus contuendas, *Ibid.*

(29) In Cathedra eſt ſacordotii ſedes; & eorum qui Spiritus Sancti Donum venale habent, Cathedras evertet, *Ibid.*

(30) Non habebant Judæi quod venire poſſunt, neque erat quod emere quis poſſet, *Ibid.*

(31) Cathedra autem Vendentium Columbas cur everterit? Secundum Literam non intelligo. Ad-

ſhould overturn the Seats of thoſe that ſold Doves? This muſt be, ſays he, a figurative Story, and ſignifies nothing leſs than the future Ejection of Prieſts out of his Church, who ſhall make Gain and Merchandize of the Goſpel.

St. *Jerome*, as his Manner is in other Caſes, gives us a literal Expoſition of this Miracle, as far as it will bear it: But then corrects himſelf again, ſaying, there are (32) Abſurdities in the Letter; but, according to its myſtical Meaning, *Jeſus* will enter his Temple of the Church, and caſt out of it Biſhops, Prieſts, and Deacons, who make a Trade of Preaching. And in another Place he tells us of the myſtical Whip (33), that *Jeſus* will make uſe of to this Purpoſe.

St. *Auguſtin* alſo is againſt the Letter of the Story of this Miracle, ſaying, (34)

monet Typo ejectorum de Templo hujuſmodi Mercatorum, in Eccleſia Dei Conſortium eos habere non poſſe, qui Sancti Spiritus Gratiam nundinentur, *In Loc. Luc.*

(32) Juxta ſimplicem Intelligentiam---quod penitus abſurdum---cæterum ſecundum Myſticos Intellectus Jeſus ingreditur Templum Patris & ejicit omnes Epiſcopos, Presbyteros, & Diaconos, &c. *In Loc. Mat.*

(33) Faciet Dominus Flagellum de Scripturarum Textuum Teſtimoniis. *In Zechar. C.* xiv.

(34) Non magnum Peccatum, ſi hoc vendebant in Templo, quod emebatur, ut offerretur in Templo, *In Loc. Johan.*

Where could be the great Sin of ſelling and buying Things in the Temple, that were for the Uſe of it, and offer'd as Sacrifice in it? We muſt therefore, ſays he, look for the Myſtery in this (35) figurative Story, and enquire what is meant by the Oxen, and Sheep, and Doves, and who are the Sellers of them in Chriſts Church; and he is very poſitive that Eccleſiaſticks, who are ſelfiſh, and make worldly Gain of the Goſpel, are here meant. And as to the Expreſſion of *turning the Temple into a Den of Thieves*, he ſays it has Reſpect to the (36) *Clergy* in Time to come, who would make ſuch a Den of Chriſt's Church.

Laſtly, with the foregoing Fathers agrees St. *Theophylact*, who is an Allegoriſt too upon this Miracle, ſaying, that thoſe (37) who ſell Doves, are the Prieſts who ſell ſpiritual Gifts; and that Chriſt ſome time or other would overturn their Seats, and clear his Church of them. In another

(35) Qui ſunt tamen qui Boves vendunt? ut in figura quæramus Myſterium facti, qui ſunt qui Oves vendunt & Columbas? ipſi ſunt qui ſua quærunt in Eccleſia, non quæ Jeſu Chriſti, *Ibid.*

(36) Vos enim feciſtis Domum meum, Domum Negotiationis & Speluncam Latronum, ſignificat futuros in Eccleſia, *L.* II. *Evang. Quæſt.* 48.

(37) Διδασκαλ& ὧν ὁ καταγέλαστος λόγον, εἰ μὴ κέρδ& ἔχει, καὶ τότε τὴν τραπέζαν ἀνατρέπει ὁ Κύρι&. *In Johan.* C. ii.

Place, he intimates what are meant by Oxen and Sheep, *viz.* the literal Senſe of the Scriptures. And if the literal Senſe be irrational and nonſenſical, the Metaphor we muſt allow to be proper, inaſmuch as now-a-days, dull and fooliſh and abſurd ſtuff we call Bulls, Fatlings, and Blunders.

Behold a wonderful Harmony among the Fathers in their Rejection of the literal, and Eſpouſal of the myſtical Senſe of this Miracle. It is ſaid of the Church in her firſt Ages, that ſhe was inſpired, and ſo ſhe was; or before an Hire for the Prieſthood was eſtabliſhed, and pleaded for, ſhe could never have written in this Faſhion, If the Fathers had lived now, and written thus, we ſhould have thought the Spirit of *Quakeriſm* was gotten amongſt them, or they would never have given ſuch an Expoſition of this Story to favour an Enmity to an *Hireling Prieſthood*.

How and when Chriſt's Power, according to the Figure and Parable before us, will enter his Church, and drive out of her theſe eccleſiaſtical Merchants, is not the Queſtion. But whenever it does ſo effectually, it will be a ſtupendous Miracle, much greater than the typical one is ſuppoſed to be; and not only a Proof of Chriſt's divine Power and Preſence in his Church, but an abſolute Demonſtration of

his

his *Meſſiahſhip*, from his Accompliſhment both of the foreſaid Prophecies of the Fathers, and of other remarkable ones of the *Old Teſtament*, which will be then clearly underſtood, and which it is not my Buſineſs here to apply or mention.

Againſt the aforeſaid Expoſition of this Miracle, perhaps it may be objected, that (excepting a little Reaſoning againſt the Letter of it) this is only the chimerical and whimſical Dream of the Fathers, whoſe Notions are obſolete, and who (38) *have adulterated Chriſtianity with their Cant and Jargon*; and that none of our *Proteſtant* and Orthodox *Divines* have ever given into their Opinion.

I confeſs, that none of our Proteſtant *Divines*, whom I know, do embrace the foreſaid Expoſition of the Fathers, but it may be nothing the worſe for all that: And tho' their Expoſition may be very diſagreeable to the Prieſthood of this Age, yet I can tell them of the greateſt Man of theſe laſt Ages, and that was *Eraſmus*, who, cautiouſly expreſſing himſelf for fear of giving Offence to the *Clergy*, is of the ſame Mind with the Fathers; or he would

(38) *Chandler*'s Vindication, &c. p. 145.

not

not ſay, that (39) *that Work of* Jeſus *did prefigure ſomewhat elſe: For* Jeſus *could not be zealous againſt the Prophanation of that Temple of the* Jews, *which was ſoon to be deſtroy'd, but meant to ſhew his Diſlike and Hatred of eccleſiaſtical Covetouſneſs, which, after the Way of the Type, he would take his Opportunity to rid the Church of.*

Before I diſmiſs this Miracle, I muſt obſerve, that if the Fathers are right above, then our *Latin* and *Engliſh* Tranſlations of the Place in St. *Matthew* err in a main Point. Inſtead of reading, *and Jeſus caſt out them that ſold and bought*, it ſhould be, *thoſe who ſold and preach'd*; that is, ſold what they preach'd: For the Word ἀγοράζειν does more properly ſignify to *preach* than to *buy*; and in this Senſe here, according to the Fathers, it ſhould be conſtrued.

Again, I muſt obſerve, that our Commentators are a little perplex'd to know

(39) Hoc facto longe aliud ſignificabat Jeſus, nec enim illum tantopere commovebat Templum illud mercimoniis Boum, Ovium, Hircorum & Columbarum profanatum; ſed oſtendere voluit Avaritiam & Quæſtum fore capitalem Peſtem Eccleſiæ, quam Templum cujus Religio mox erat abolenda, figurabat—— In nullum Hominum Genus acrius ſæviit Jeſus, ſed hos ipſe ſibi ſervabit ejiciendos, cum videbitur. *In Loc. Matt.* xxi.

who,

who, and what those κολλυβίσων *Money-Changers*, were. The Greek (40) Word does import those who have a Knack to barter away little base and Brass Money, with the Effigies of an Ox or Bull on it, in exchange for good Coin. How applicable the Word was to any Merchants of the old Temple at *Jerusalem*, is hard to conceive. But it is very agreeable to our ecclesiastical *Collybists*, who, as I may appeal to Freethinkers, vend their Brazen-faced Bulls and Blunders at an extravagant and great Price. And if τραπεζας, which is translated *Tables*, does properly signify (41) *Pulpits*, who can help it?

So much then on the Miracle of *Jesus*'s driving the *Sellers* and *Buyers* out of the Temple. And now I appeal to our *Divines*, whether it be not an absurd, improbable, and incredible Story according to the Letter; and whether it be any other than, as the Fathers said of it, a prophetical and parabolical Narrative of what would be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by *Jesus*. And so I come to speak to a

2. Second Miracle of Jesus, and that is,

(40) *Vid.* Suicerum in Κολλυβίσης.

(41) Τραπεζα, apud Aristophanem, est Pulpitum, *Vid.* Scapulam.

that

that of his (42) *caſting the Devils out of the Madman or Madmen, and permitting them to enter into the Herd of Swine, which thereupon ran down a Precipice, and were all choaked in the Sea.*

To exorciſe, or caſt Devils out of the Poſſeſs'd, without conſidering the Nature of ſuch a Poſſeſſion, or the Nature and Power of the Devil, we'll allow to be not only a kind and beneficent Act, but a great Miracle. But then, be the Miracle as great as can be imagined, it is no more than what falſe Teachers, (43) *Workers of Iniquity,* and even ſome Artiſts amongſt the *Jews*, have done before; conſequently, ſuch a Work of *Exorciſm* in our Saviour, could be no Proof of his divine Authority. And if there was no more to be ſaid againſt this Miracle, this is enough to ſet it aſide, and to ſpoil the Argument of *Jeſus*'s divine Power from it. But there are many Circumſtances in the Story, literally conſider'd, that would induce us to call the Truth of the whole into queſtion. How came thoſe Madmen to have their Dwelling amongſt the Tombs of a Burying-Ground? Where was the Humanity of the People, that did not take Care of them, in Pity to them, as well as

(42) *Matt.* viii. *Mark* v. *Luke* viii.
(43) *Luke* xiii. ver. 27.

for

for the Safety of others? Or if no Chains, as the Text ſays, which is hardly credible, could hold them, it was poſſible ſurely, as well as lawful, to diſpatch them, rather than their Neighbours and Paſſengers ſhould be in Danger from them. Believe then this Part of the Story who can? But what's worſe, it's not credible there was any Herd of *Swine* in that Country. If any Hiſtorians but the *Evangeliſts* had ſaid ſo, none would have believed it. The *Jews* are forbidden to eat Swine's Fleſh; what then ſhould they do with Swine (which are good for nothing till they are dead) who eat neither *Pig*, *Pork*, nor *Bacon*? Some may ſay, that they were kept there for the Uſe of Strangers: But this could not be, becauſe that after the Time of *Antiochus*, who polluted the Temple with the Sacrifice of an *Hog*, the *Jews* (44) forbad, under the Pain of an *Anathema*, the keeping of any *Swine* in their Country. Perhaps it may be ſaid, that the *Gadarenes*, ſo call'd from the Place of their Abode, were not *Jews*, but neighbouring *Gentiles*, with whom it was lawful to eat, and keep *Swine*. We will ſuppoſe ſo, tho' it is improbable; but then its unlikely (without better Rea-

(44) *Spencer* de Legibus Hebræ, *p.* 117.

ſon than at preſent we are appriſed of) that our Saviour would permit the *Devils* to enter into a Herd of them to their Deſtruction. Where was the Goodneſs and Juſtice of his ſo doing? Let our *Divines* account for it, if they can. It is commonly ſaid of our Saviour, and I believe it, that his Life was entirely innocent, that his Miracles were all uſeful and beneficial to Mankind, and that he did no Wrong to any one. But how can this be rightly ſaid of him, if this Story be literally true? The Proprietors of the Swine were great Loſers and Sufferers; and we don't read that *Jeſus* made them amends, or that they deſerv'd ſuch Uſage from him. The Proprietors of the Swine, it ſeems, upon this Damage done them by *Jeſus*, deſire him to depart out of their Coaſts, to prevent farther Miſchief; which was gentler Reſentment, than we can imagine any others would have made of the like Injury. I know not what our *Divines* think of this Part of the Story, nor wherefore *Jeſus* eſcaped ſo well; but if any *Exorciſt* in this our Age and Nation, had pretended to expel the *Devil* out of one poſſeſs'd, and permitted him to enter into a Flock of Sheep, the People would have ſaid that he had bewitch'd both; and our Laws, and Judges too of the

laſt

laſt Age, would have made him to ſwing for it.

Without Offence, I hope, I have argued againſt the Letter of this ſtrange Story of the holy *Jeſus*; I ſhould not have dared to have ſaid ſo much againſt it, but upon the Encouragement of *Origen* and other Fathers, who ſay, we ought to expoſe the Abſurdities of the Letter, as much as may be, to turn Men's Heads to the myſtical and true Meaning.

Let's hear then what the Fathers ſay to this Miracle. *Origen*'s Commentaries on this Part of St. *Matthew*, and St. *Luke*'s Goſpel, are loſt; otherwiſe unqueſtionably he would not only have told us, that he believed no more of the Letter of this Story, than he did of the *Devil*'s (45) taking our Saviour to the Top of a Mountain, and ſhewing him all the Kingdoms of the World; but, as he is an admirable *Myſtiſt*, would have given us curious Light into the Allegory and Myſtery of it. But without *Origen*, we have enough in the other Fathers againſt the Letter of this Story.

St. *Hilary* reckoning up all the Parts of this Miracle together, ſays of it, that it is (46) typical and parabolical, and written

(45) *Lib.* IV. De Principiis.

(46) Hanc habeant Cauſam, ut eſſet in rebus gerendis futuri plena meditatio, *In Loc. Matt.* In hoc Typica ratio ſervata eſt, *Ibid.*

for our Meditation of what would be done hereafter by the holy *Jeſus*. According to him, and other Fathers, the *Madman* is Mankind; or if they were two, they were *Jew* and *Gentile* at Chriſt's Coming, who may be ſaid to (47) be *poſſeſs'd with Devils*, in as much as they were under the Rule of diabolical Sins, and ſubject to the Worſhip of δαιμονίων falſe Deities, which we tranſlate *Devils*. They were *ſo fierce* (48) *as no Chains could hold them*, becauſe of their moſt furious Rage and Enmity to the Church, whom no Bonds of Reaſon could reſtrain from doing Violence to the Chriſtians. They are ſaid *to be* (49) *naked*, becauſe they were deſtitute of the Cloathing of the Spirit and of Grace. And may be ſaid to be *among the* (50) *Tombs*, becauſe they were dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins. After that *Jeſus* had exorcis'd theſe diabolical Spirits out of the *Gentiles*, and brought them to their right Senſes, which

(47) Significatæ ſunt gentes quæ multis dæmonibus ſerviebant. *Auguſtin in Luc. Quæſt.* 13.

(48) Humanum genus ad Adventum Domini vexabatur furore dementi, rumpens vincula rationis, St. *Amb. in Loc. Luc.*

(49) Nudus quicunque tegumentum Naturæ ſuæ & Virtutis amiſit. *Amb. ibid.*

(53) In Tumulis Sepulchrorum; quid enim aliud ſunt Corpora perfidorum, niſi quædam defunctorum Sepulchra in quibus Dei verbum non habitat, *Ibid.*

was upon their Converſion to the Faith; then a *good way off*, ſome Ages after, did the like *Devils*, by divine Permiſſion, enter into a (51) *Herd of Swine, i. e.* into *Hereticks* of impure Lives, and furious Natures. What ſort of *Hereticks* are meant, or whether they are not to be underſtood of Chriſtians in general, let our *Divines* conſider. But one would be apt to think that *Miniſters of the Letter* are included, becauſe the *Letter* of the Scripture is myſtically call'd (52) *Swines Food*. I am not obliged to purſue the myſtical Interpretation of this Parable (for ſo I will call it) thro' all its Parts, nor to ſay what is meant by the Sea, that the *Swine* are to be abſorp'd in; but leave our *Divines* to chew upon this myſtical Conſtruction given them in part, and to conſider, whether there's not a Neceſſity for ſuch an Interpretation to make the Story credible.

And thus have I given you the Opinion and Expoſition of the Fathers upon this Miracle, which they turn all into Myſtery. If our *Divines* are ſtill for adhering to the

(51) Videntes Dæmones non ſibi jam locum in gentibus derelinqui, ut patiatur habitare ſe in Hæreticis deprecantur. *Hilar. in Loc. Matt.*

(52) Litera eſt Palea, & frequenter evenit, ut homines hujus ſæculi myſtica neſcientes, ſimplici Scripturarum Lectione paſcuntur, *Hieron. in* Iſa. xi.

Letter

Letter of this Story, let them account for the Difficulties it is involv'd with. To cure Men violently diſtracted, and poſſeſs'd with *Devils*, is, whether it be miraculous or not, a good and great Work; but to ſend the *Devils*, who without *Jeſus*'s Permiſſion could not go, into the *Herd of Swine*, was an Injury done to the Proprietors, and unbecoming of the Goodneſs of the holy *Jeſus*. Neither is there any other Way to ſolve the Difficulty, than by looking upon the whole, with the Fathers, as Type and Figure.

If this miraculous Story had been recorded of *Mahomet*, and not of *Jeſus*, our *Divines*, I dare ſay, would have work'd it up to a Confutation of *Mahometaniſm*. *Mahomet* ſhould have been, with them, nothing leſs than a *Wizard*, an *Enchanter*, a *Dealer* with familiar Spirits, a ſworn *Slave* to the Devil; and his *Muſſulmen* would have been hard put to it to write a good Defence of him.

When our Saviour was brought before *Pilate* to be arraign'd, try'd, and condemned, *Pilate* put this Queſtion to the *Jews*, ſaying, *What Evil hath Jeſus done?* If both, or either of the Stories above, had been literally true of *Jeſus*, there had been no need of falſe Witneſſes againſt him. The Merchants of the Temple were at hand,

hand, who could have ſworn "that he was "the Author of an Uproar and Riot, the "like was never ſeen on their Market-"Day; that they were great Sufferers "and Loſers in their Trades; and, whe-"ther he or his Party had ſtolen any of "their Goods or not; yet ſome were "embezzled, and others damaged; and "all thro' the outragious Violence of this "unruly Fellow, againſt Law and Au-"thority." If ſuch Evidence as this was not enough to convict *Jeſus* of a capital Crime, then the *Swine-Herds* of the *Gaderenes* might have depoſed, "how they "believed him to be a *Wizard*, and "had loſt Two thouſand Swine through "his Faſcinations: That he bid the De-"vils to go into our Cattle, is not to be "deny'd. And if he cured one or two "of our Countrymen of a violent Poſ-"ſeſſion, yet inaſmuch as he did us this "Injury in our Swine, we juſtly ſuſpect "him of diabolical Practices upon both."

Upon ſuch Evidence as this, *Pilate* asks the Opinion of *Jews*, ſaying, *What think you?* If they all had condemn'd him to be guilty of Death, it is no wonder, ſince there is not a *Jury* in *England* that would have acquitted any one arraigned and accuſed in the like Caſe.

It is well for our literal *Doctors*, that ſuch Accuſations were not brought againſt *Jeſus*; or their Heads would have been ſadly puzzled to vindicate his Innocence, and to prove the Injuſtice and Undeſervedneſs of his Death and Sufferings. But for this Reaſon, if no other, that no ſuch Crimes were laid to his Charge, I believe little or nothing of either of the ſeemingly miraculous Stories before us, but look upon them both as prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what would myſteriouſly and more wonderfully, and conſiſtently with the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of *Jeſus*, be done by him. And ſo I paſs to a

3. Third Miracle of *Jeſus*, and that is *his Transfiguration* (53) *on the Mount*. And this is the darkeſt and blindeſt Story of the whole Goſpel, which a Man can make neither Head nor Foot of; and I queſtion whether the Conceptions of any two thinking *Doctors* do agree about it. To ſay there is nothing in the Letter of this Story, we Believers muſt not, becauſe St. *Peter* (54) ſays he was an Eye-witneſs of *Jeſus*'s Majeſty, ſaw his Glory on the Mount, and heard the Voice out of the

(53) *Matt.* xvii. *Mark* ix. *Luke* ix.
(54) 2 *Pet.* i. 16, 17, 18.

Cloud.

Cloud. But as Infidels will be prying into the Conduct of *Jeſus*'s Life, and forming their Exceptions to the Credibility or Probability of this or that Part of it; ſo we Chriſtians ſhould be ready at an Anſwer, that might reaſonably ſatisfy them; and not forcibly bear down their Oppoſition, which will make no ſincere Converts of them. And I believe they would eaſily diſtreſs us with Difficulties and Objections to the Letter of this Story.

St. *Auguſtin* himſelf (55) owns, that the whole of it might be perform'd by Magic Art; and we know, in theſe our Days, that ſome Jugglers are ſtrange Artiſts at the Imitation of a Voice, and to make it as if it came from afar off, when it is uttered cloſe by us, and can caſt themſelves too into different Forms and Shapes, without a Miracle, to the Surpriſe and Admiration of Spectators.

But what, I trow, do our *Divines* mean by *Jeſus*'s *Transfiguration*. We read that his Countenance did ſhine like the Sun, and his Raiment was made as white as Snow, and that's all. And in this enough can we think, to demonſtrate that Tranſaction, a miraculous *Transfiguration*? Phi-

(55) Poſſunt Infideles iſtam Vocem delatam de Cœlo, per conjecturas humanas & illicitas Curioſitates ad magicas Artes referre, *In Serm.* xliii. §. 5.

loſophers will tell us, that the Reflections of the Light of the Sun, will change the Appearance of Colours, and to none more than Whiteneſs; and *Sceptics* will ſay, that it's no Wonder if the Countenance of *Jeſus* look'd *Rubicund*, when the Sun might ſhine on it.

The Word in the Original for *transfigured*, is μετεμορφώθη, that is, he was metamorphoſed, transform'd, or, if you will, transfigured. And what is to be underſtood by a *Metamorphoſis*, we are to learn not only from the natural Import of the Word, but from the ancient Uſe of it. Accordingly, it ſignifies nothing leſs than the Change or Transformation of a Perſon into the Forms, Shapes, and Eſſences of Creatures and Things of a quite different Species, Size, and Figure: But *Jeſus*, it is conceived, was not ſo *transfigured*. Our *Divines*, I ſuppoſe, would not have him thought ſuch a *Poſture-maſter* for the whole World. If I, or any one elſe, ſhould aſſert, that *Jeſus* upon the Mount transformed himſelf into a Calf, a Lion, a Bear, a Ram, a Goat, an Hydra, a Stone, a Tree, and into many other Things of the animate and inanimate World, I dare ſay there would, among our orthodox *Divines*, be ſuch Exclamations againſt me for Blaſphemy, as

the

the like were never heard of. They, to be ſure, will not hear of ſuch a Transfiguration; nor, like good plain Believers, will bear any thing more than that *Jeſus*'s *Countenance did ſhine* like the Sun, and the Colour of his Veſtments was changed; which whether it comes up to the Import of a *Metamophoſis* or not, they don't care.

But to cloſe with our *Divines*, and acknowledge that the glorious Change of *Jeſus*'s Countenance, and of the Colour of his Veſtments, was a true and proper Transfiguration, and that it was as real and wonderful a Miracle as could be wrought: But then we may, I hope, ask them, what was the particular Reaſon and Uſe of this Miracle? Was it a Miracle only for the ſake of a Miracle? That's an Abſurdity in the Opinion of (56) St. *Auguſtin*, who ſays, what is reaſonable to think, that all and every one of *Jeſus*'s Miracles had its particular End and Uſe; or he who is the Wiſdom as well as Power of God, had never wrought it. And what, I pray, was the Uſe of this Miracle? Of that the evangelical Hiſtory is ſilent, and our *Divines*, with all their reaſoning Faculties, can ſay nothing to it.

(56) Neque enim Miracula propter Miracula faciebat, ſed ut illa quæ faciebat, mira eſſent videntibus, vera eſſent intelligentibus, *In Serm.* xcviii. *Sect.* 3.

And what did *Moſes* and *Elias* on the Mount with *Jeſus*? Was it in their own proper Perſons that they appear'd? or were they only ſome Spectres and Apparitions in reſemblance of them? It is ſaid, that they were talking with *Jeſus*; what then did they talk about? The three greateſt Prophets and Philoſophers of the Univerſe could not poſſibly meet and confer together, but on the moſt ſublime, uſeful, and edifying Subject. It's ſtrange that the Apoſtles, who over-heard their Confabulation, did not make a Report of it, and tranſmit it to Poſterity for our Edification and Inſtruction. St. *Luke*, as our *Engliſh* Tranſlantion has it, ſeems to ſay, that they talked together of *Jeſus*'s *Deceaſe which he ſhould accompliſh at Jeruſalem*; but this can't be the Meaning of St. *Luke*'s (57) Words, which ſo interpreted, are no leſs than a *Barbariſm*, and, I appeal to our Greek *Criticks*, an improper Expreſſion of ſuch Signification. We muſt then look for a more proper Conſtruction of the Phraſe in St. *Luke*, or we muſt remain in the Dark, as to the Subject that *Moſes* and *Elias* talked with *Jeſus* about.

But further, Why could not this Miracle have been wrought in the Valley as

(57) Ἔλεγον τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ ἣν ἤμελλε πλήρουν, C. ix. V. 31.

well

well as upon a Mountain, whither *Jeſus* and his three Apoſtles aſcended for the Work of it? Naughty *Infidels* will ſay, it was for the Advantage of a Cloud, which often moves and reſts on the Tops of Mountains, to diſplay his Pranks in. And why was it not done in the Preſence of the Multitude, as well as of his three Apoſtles? The more Witneſſes of a Miracle, the better it is atteſted, and the more reaſonably credited; and there could not ſurely be too many Witneſſes of this, any more than of others of *Jeſus*'s Miracles, if real ones. Ought not the unbelieving Multitude, for many Unbelievers unqueſtionably were amongſt them, to have had a Sight and Hearing of this Miracle, as well as the Apoſtles? Who ſhould rather ſee the Miracle, than thoſe who wanted Conviction? Were they to take the Report of the Miracle upon the Word of the Apoſtles, who were Parties in the Cauſe? Our *Divines* may poſſibly ſay they ought: But *Infidels* and *Free-thinkers* would cry out againſt them, for juggling Tricks, and pious Impoſtures.

Theſe are all Difficulties and hard Queſtions about the Miracle of Chriſt's Transfiguration, which our *Clergy*, who are Admirers of the Letter of that Story, are obliged to account for; and I believe it will

will be long enough before they give a proper and ſatisfactory Anſwer to many of them.

Let's hear then what the Fathers ſay to this miraculous Story of *Jeſus*'s Transfiguration. And it is agreed amongſt them, that the whole is but a Type, (58) Prefiguration, and (59) ænigmatical Reſemblance of a future and more glorious and real Transfiguration. And whenever they ſpeak of any Part of the Story, they never explain to us how the Matter went upon Mount *Tabor*, but tell us of what *this* or *that* Part of it is figurative and emblematical; and how it is to be underſtood, and will be fulfill'd in future Time. As thus, by *the* (60) *ſix Days*, they underſtand ſix Ages of the World, after which a real and myſterious Transfiguration will be exhibited to our intellectual

(58) Regni cœleſtis Honor præfiguratur, S. *Hilar. in Loc. Matt.* In Transfiguratione futura Regni Præmeditatio & Gloria demonſtrata eſt, S. *Hieron. in Loc. Matt.*

(59) Αἰνιγματώδης παραδείξις τῆς Βασιλείας. Anaſt. in Transfig. Dom. Ὑποδείγμα τῆς δόξης ἐκείνης. S. *Chryſoſt. in Loc. Matt.*

(60) Sex millium ſcilicet Annorum Temporibus evolutis, S. *Hilar. in Loc. Matt.* Sic poſt Sex Ætates Dominus a perfectis Famulis conſpicietur, *Dionyſ. Alex. apud Damaſcen. in Orat. de Transfig.*

Views.

Views. By *Moſes* and *Elias* (61) talking with *Jeſus*, they mean the Law and the Prophets, upon an allegorical Interpretation, bearing Teſtimony unto Chriſt as the Fulfiller of them. By the (62) *Mountain* on which this future Tranſfiguration will be exhibited, they underſtand the ſublime and anagogical Senſe of the Law and the Prophets. By his *Tranſfiguration* itſelf, they mean his taking upon him, and paſſing through the Forms of all the Types of him under the Law, as of a Lamb, a Lion, a Serpent, a Calf, a Rock, a Stone, and of many others, which he is to fulfil, and which will then be clearly diſcern'd by us. By the black Cloud (63) that at preſent obſtructs this Viſion, they underſtand the Letter of the Old Teſtament. By the white (64) Veſtments of *Jeſus*, they mean the Words of the Scrip-

(61) Et Moſes & Elias apparuerunt in Gloria, cum Jeſu colloquentes, in quo oſtenditur Legem & Prophetas cum Evangeliis conſonare & eadem Gloria ſpiritualis intelligentiæ refulgere, *Origen in Epiſt. ad Rom.* c. 1.

(62) Montem aſcendit ut te doceat, ne quæras eum niſi in Legis & Prophetarum montibus, *Origen in Cantic. Cantic. Hom.* 3.

(63) Per nubem tetram intellige opacitatem Legis. *Damaſcen. in Orat. de Tranſfigur.*

(64) Veſtimenta candida Jeſu ſunt Sermones & Scripta Evangeliorum. *Origen in Lev. Mart.*

tures,

tures, which will then ſhine clear and bright. By the Voice out of the Cloud, they mean, with St. *Peter*, the Word of Prophecy, that will ſound in the Ears of our Apprehenſions. And laſtly, they tell us, that the Way to attain to the Sight of this glorious Viſion, is by aſcending (not by local Motion, but by Reaſon) to the Tops of the Mountain of the myſterious and ſublime Senſe of the Law and the Prophets. If we continue in the Plains and Vallies (65) of the Letter, like the Multitude under the Mountain, we ſhall never ſee *Jeſus* in his ſhining Veſtments, or how he was transform'd into the Types of the Law; nor *Moſes* and *Elias* talking with him; nor the Law and the Prophets agreeing harmoniouſly in a Teſtimony to him.

After this faſhion do the Fathers, one or other of them, copiouſly treat on every Part of this Transfiguration of *Jeſus*. I could collect an almoſt infinite Number of Paſſages out of their Writings to this Pur-

(65) Si quis Litteram ſequitur, & deorſum eſt totus, hic non poteſt videre Jeſum in veſte candida; qui autem ſequitur Sermonem Dei & ad montana, id eſt, excelſa Legis conſcendit, iſti Jeſus commutatur.—— Quamdiu Litteram ſequimur occidentem, Moſes & Elias cum Jeſu non loquuntur; ſin ſpiritualiter intelligimus, ſtatim Moſes & Elias veniunt, id eſt Lex & Prophetæ, & colloquuntur cum Evangelio, *Johan. Hieroſ. Hom.* 32.

poſe:

poſe: But from theſe few it is plain, they look'd on the Story of Chriſt's Transfiguration, but as a Figure and Parable; and they were certainly in the right on't, in as much as this their Senſe of the Matter, and no other, will ſolve the Difficulties before ſtarted againſt the Letter, as any one may diſcern, if he attentively review and compare one with the other: As, for inſtance, this their Senſe and Interpretation lets us into the Reaſon of *Moſes* and *Elias*'s appearing on the Mount with *Jeſus*; and gives us to underſtand what they talk'd about, and that was, not on *Jeſus*'s *Deceaſe which he would accompliſh at* Jeruſalem, as our Tranſlation has it, but on the Prophecy of the Old Teſtament; particularly, as St. *Luke* ſays, on *Moſes*'s Book of *Exodus, and how he would fulfill it* at the New Jeruſalem.

Whether any, beſides my ſelf, does really apprehend, and is willing to underſtand this Story of Chriſt's Transfiguration, as I do, I neither know nor care. I am not bound to find others, Ears, Eyes and Capacities. What I have ſaid is enough to ſhew the Senſe of the Fathers about this Matter. If any diſlike their concurrent Opinion of *Jeſus*'s Transfiguration's being an Emblem, an Enigma, and figurative Repreſentation of a future and moſt glori-

ous Transfiguration, ſuch a one as they ſpeak of; let him account for the Difficulties and Objections which I have before raiſed againſt the Letter of this Story. In the mean time I ſhall think it, literally, an abſurd, improbable, and incredible one, and no other than a prophetical and parabolical Narrative of what will be myſteriouſly and more wonderfully done by *Jeſus*.

And thus I have conſidered *three* of the Miracles of our Saviour, and ſhewn how they are Abſurdities, according to the Letter, conſequently do make nothing for his Authority and *Meſſiahſhip*. I can and will do as much by his other Miracles; for I would not have any one think I am gotten to the End of my Tedder, but for ſome Reaſons beſt known to my ſelf, I publiſh theſe Remarks on theſe three firſt. After the *Clergy* have chew'd upon theſe a while, I will take into Examination ſome others of *Jeſus*'s Miracles, which for their literal Story are admired by them. As for inſtance.

I will take to task his Miracle (66) *of changing Water into Wine at a Marriage in Cana of Galilee*; which was the beginning of *Jeſus*'s Miracles, and ſhould by rights have been firſt ſpoken to; but I am

(66) *John* ii.

almoſt

almoſt too grave to handle the Letter of this Story as I ought; and if I had treated it as ludicrouſly as it deſerves, I don't know but at ſetting out, I ſhould have put the *Clergy* quite out of all Temper. I would not now for all the World be ſo impious and prophane, as to believe, with our *Divines*, what is contain'd and imply'd in the Letter of this Story. If *Apollonius Tyanæus*, and not *Jeſus*, had been the Author of this Miracle, we ſhould often have reproached his Memory with it. It is ſaid of *Apollonius Tyanæus*, that a Table was all on a ſudden, at his Command, miraculouſly ſpread with Variety of nice Diſhes for the Entertainment of himſelf and his Gueſts; which Miracle our *Divines* can tell him, makes not at all to his Credit, in as much as it was done for the Service and Pleaſure of luxurious Appetites. But if *Apollonius* had done, as our *Jeſus* did at this Wedding, they would have ſaid much worſe of him; and that, modeſtly ſpeaking, he delighted to make his Friends thoroughly merry, or he would not be at the Pains of a Miracle to turn ſo much Water into Wine, after they had before *well drank*. If the Fathers then don't help us out at the myſtical and true Meaning of this Miracle, ſuch farther Objections may be

form'd against the Letter, as may make our *Divines* asham'd of it.

I will also take into Examination *Jesus*'s Miracle (67) of *feeding many Thousands in the Wilderness with a few Loaves and Fishes*; which, according to the Letter, are most romantick Tales. I don't in the least question *Jesus*'s Power to magnify or multiply the Loaves, and, if he pleas'd, to meliorate the Bread: But that many thousands of Men, Women, and Children, should follow him into the Wilderness, and stay with him three Days and Nights too, without eating, is a little against Sense and Reason. Whether the Wilderness was near to, or far from the People's Habitations, the Difficulties attending the Story are equally great. I wonder how *Jesus* amused them all the while, that they had the Patience to stay with him without Food; but I much more wonder, that no Victuallers, besides the *Lad* with his Loaves and Fishes, of whom, and his Occupation, whether it was that of a *Baker* or *Fishmonger*; and of his Neglect of his Master's Business here; and of the Reason that he met with no hungry Chapmen for his Bread before, we shall make some Enquiry; but particularly why he alone, I

(67) *Matt.* xiv. and xv, *&c.*

say,

ſay, and no other Victuallers, no other Retailers of Cakes and Gingerbread followed the Camp. In ſhort, for all the imaginary Greatneſs of the Miracle (which there is a Way to reduce and leſſen) of *Jeſus*'s feeding his Thouſands with a few Loaves, there muſt be ſome Faſcination or Enchantment (condemn'd by the Laws of the *Jews* as well as of other Nations) in the Matter; or the People, if they had ſtay'd one Day, would not two, much leſs three *to faint*, but would, eſpecially the Women and Children, have been for returning the firſt Night home. We muſt then ſeek to the Fathers (who ſay the five Books of *Moſes* are the *five Barley Loaves*, &c. and the ſeptiform'd Spirit, the *ſeven Loaves*, *&c.*) for a good Notion of this Miracle, and if they don't make it a Parable; do what our *Divines* can, it will turn to the Diſhonour of the holy *Jeſus*.

I will alſo conſider the Miracle of *Jeſus*'s (68) *curing the Man ſick of the Palſy, for whom the Roof of the Houſe was broken up, to let him down into the Room where* Jeſus *was, becauſe his Bearers could not enter in at the Door for the Preſs of the People*. This literally is ſuch a *Rodomontado*, that were Men to ſtretch for a Wa-

(68) *Mark* ii. *Luke* v.

ger,

ger, againſt Reaſon and Truth, none could out-do it. Where was the Humanity of the People, and wherefore did they ſo tumultuate againſt the Door of the Houſe? It's *ſtrange* they had not ſo much Compaſſion on the *Paralytick*, as to give way to him: It's *more ſtrange* that his Bearers could get to the Top of the Houſe with him and his Bed too, when they could not get to the Door, nor the Sides of it: It's *yet ſtranger*, that the good Man of the Houſe would ſuffer his Houſe to be broken up, when it could not be long e're the Tumult of the People would be appeas'd: But *moſt ſtrange*, that *Jeſus*, who could drive his Thouſands out of the Temple before him, and draw as many after him into the Wilderneſs, did not, by Force or Perſuaſion, make the People to retreat, but that ſuch needleſs Trouble and Pains muſt be taken for the miraculous Cure of this poor Man. Let's think of theſe Things againſt the Time, that out of the Fathers I prove this Story to be a Parable.

I will alſo take into Conſideration the Miracle of *Jeſus*'s curing *the* (69) *blind Man, for whom Eye-ſalve was made of Clay and Spittle*; which Eye-ſalve, whether it was balſamick or not, does equally

(69) *John* ix.

affect

affect the Credit of the Miracle. If it was naturally medicinal, there's an End of the Miracle; and if it was not at all medicinal, it was fooliſhly and impertinently apply'd, and can be no otherwiſe accounted for, than by conſidering it, with the Fathers, as a figurative Act in *Jeſus*.

I will alſo take into Conſideration the ſeveral Stories of *Jeſus*'s raiſing of the Dead; and, without queſtioning his actual bringing of the Dead to Life again, will prove from the Circumſtances of thoſe Stories, that they are parabolical, and are not literally to be apply'd to the Proof of *Jeſus*'s divine Authority and Meſſiahſhip; or, for inſtance, *Jeſus*, when he raiſed *Jairus*'s (70) Daughter from the Dead, would never have turned the People out of the Houſe, who ſhould have been his beſt and propereſt Witneſſes.

I will alſo conſider the Miracle of *Jeſus*'s (71) *curſing the Fig-tree*, for its not bearing Fruit out of Seaſon; which, upon the bear Mention of it, appears to be a fooliſh, abſurd, and ridiculous Act, if not figurative.

I will alſo conſider the (72) Journey of the wiſe Men out of the Eaſt, with their

(70) *Mark* v. (71) *Matt.* xxi. *Mark*.
(72) *Matt.* ii.

(literally)

(literally) ſenſeleſs and ridiculous Preſents of *Franckincenſe* and *Myrrh*, to a new-born Babe. If with their *Gold*, which could be but little, they had brought their *Dozens* of Sugar, Soap, and Candles, which would have been of Uſe to the Child and his poor Mother in the Straw, they had acted like wiſe as well as good Men. But what, I pray, was the Meaning and Reaſon of a Star, like a *Will-a-Whiſp*, for their Guide to the Place, where the holy Infant lay. Could not God, by divine Impulſe, in a Viſion or in a Dream, as he ordered their Return home, have ſent them on this important Errand; but that a Star muſt be taken or made out of Courſe to this Purpoſe? I wonder what Communication paſſed between theſe wiſe Men and the Star, or how they came to know one another's Uſe and Intention. But the Fathers ſhall ſpeak hereafter farther to the Senſeleſneſs of this Story literally, and make out the Myſtery and true Meaning of it.

I will alſo, by the Leave of our *Divines*, take again into Conſideration the miraculous Conception of the Virgin *Mary*, and the Reſurrection of *Jeſus* from the Dead. I do believe, if it may ſo pleaſe our *Divines*, that *Jeſus* was born of a pure Virgin, and that he roſe from the Dead: But ſpeaking too briefly, in the

Moderator,

Moderator, to theſe two Miracles, they took Offence. I will therefore give them a Review, and ſpeak home to them; particularly to Chriſt's Reſurrection, the evangelical Story of which, literally, is ſuch a Complication of Abſurdities, Incoherences, and Contradictions, that unleſs the Fathers can help us to a better underſtanding of the *Evangeliſts* than we have at preſent, we muſt of neceſſity give up the Belief of it.

Theſe and many (73) other of the hiſtorical and miraculous Parts of *Jeſus*'s Life, will I take into Examination, and ſhew, that none of them literally do prove his divine Authority; ſo far from it, that they are full of Abſurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities; but that his whole Life in the Fleſh, is but (74) Type, Figure, and Parable of his myſterious and ſpiritual Life and Operations in Mankind.

In the End of this Head, it will be a curious and diverting Subject to examine the Miracles of *Jeſus*, as they are literally underſtood, by the Notions, which our

(73) Alia quamplurima his ſimilia in Evangeliis inveniet, quicunque attentius legerit. *Origen. de Principiis*, lib. iv.

(74) Quæ Enarratio erit Evangelii ſenſibilis, niſi accommodetur ad intelligibile & ſpirituale? Nulla ſane. *Origen. in Præfat. ad Johan. Evang.*

Divines have advanced about Miracles; and to ſhew, that even their Notions, compared with Chriſt's Miracles, are deſtructive of his Authority, and ſubverſive of Chriſtianity. This, I ſay, would be a moſt diverting Undertaking, and it will be ſtrange, if ſome *Free-thinker*, that loves Pleaſure of this kind, does not take the Hint, and ſnatch the Work out of my Hands. If I do it myſelf, I ſhall have eſpecial Regard to the Writers againſt the *Grounds*, without paſſing by Mr. *Chandler*'s *Eſſay on Miracles*; on which the more Remarks will be made, if it be but to pay my Reſpects to the *Archbiſhop*'s Judgment, and to ſhew my Admiration at thoſe extravagant Praiſes which his *Grace* at *Lambeth* has beſtowed on that Author. Among other his notable Notions of a Miracle (and the *Archbiſhop* ſays he has (75) *ſet the Notion of a Miracle upon a clear and ſure Foundation*) one is, (76) *That Miracles ſhould be Things probable as well as poſſible, that they do not carry along with them the Appearance of Romance and Fable, which would unavoidably prejudice Men againſt believing them.* This

(75) *See Archbiſhop* Wake's *Manuſcript Letter to Mr.* Chandler, *which is handed about Town and Country.*

(76) Chandler's *Vindication*, &c. p. 81.

is

is certainly a good and right Notion of a divine Miracle; and I don't doubt, but according to it, Mr. *Chandler* and the *Archbiſhop* think, they can juſtify the literal Story of our Saviour's Miracles, againſt the Charge of *Fable* and *Romance*: But whether they are able to do it or not, I ſhall go on, in ſome Diſcourſes hereafter to be publiſh'd, to prove that our *Divines*, by eſpouſing the Letter of Chriſt's Miracles, have deceived themſelves into the Belief of the moſt arrant *Quixotiſm* that can be deviſed and palm'd upon the Underſtandings of Mankind. I ſay, they have deceived themſelves; for neither the Fathers, nor the Apoſtles, nor even *Jeſus* himſelf, meant that his Miracles, as recorded in the *Evangeliſts*, ſhould be taken in a literal Senſe, but in (77) a myſtical, figurative and parabolical one. And this ſhould bring me to the

III. Head of my Diſcourſe; that is, to conſider what *Jeſus* means, when he appeals to his Works and Miracles, as to a Witneſs and Teſtimony of his divine Authority; and to ſhew, that he could not properly and truly refer to thoſe ſuppoſed

(77) Dominus noſter ea quæ faciebat corporaliter, etiam ſpiritualiter volebat intelligi, &c. *Auguſt. Serm.* xcviii. *Sect.* 3.

to be wrought by him in the *Fleſh*, but to thoſe myſtical ones, he would do in the *Spirit*, of which thoſe ſeemingly wrought by him in the Fleſh, are but Types and Shadows.

But this Head can't be rightly ſpoken to, till I have more amply diſcuſs'd the former, which, by God's Leave, I promiſe to do: And if my *courteous Readers* will be ſo kind as to truſt me till that Time, I aſſure them to prove, that no Ignorance and Stupidity can be greater, than the Imagination that *Jeſus* really appeal'd to his Miracles, ſuppoſed to have been wrought by him in the Fleſh, as to a Witneſs and Teſtimony of his Divine Authority, and *Meſſiahſhip*.

In the mean time our *Divines* may go on in their own Way, if they think fit, and admire *Jeſus* of old, and celebrate his Power and Praiſes for healing of bodily Diſeaſes, and doing other notable Feats according to the Letter of the evangelical Story; but I am for the ſpiritual *Jeſus* and *Meſſiah*, who cures the worſe (78) Diſtempers of the Soul, and does other myſterious and moſt miraculous Works, of which, thoſe recorded in the Evangeliſts,

(78) Quos in corporibus morbos ſanavit Chriſtus, hi in animabus exiſtunt, & ſupernam ejus opem requirunt, *Johan. Nepot. Hieroſ.* Hom. LXI.

are

are but Figure and Parable. This is the primitive and concurrent Opinion about the true *Meſſiah*, which the Fathers univerſally adhere to. Whether our *Jeſus*, at this Day, be ſuch a ſpiritual *Meſſiah* to his Church, or whether ſhe does not ſtand in need of ſuch a one, is the Queſtion that our *Divines* are to ſee to. But I will add here, what I believe, and ſhall have another Opportunity to prove, that God on purpoſe ſuffer'd or empower'd *falſe* as well as *true* Prophets, *bad* as well as *good* Men, ſuch as *Apollonius*, *Veſpaſian*, and many others, to cure Diſeaſes, and to do other mighty Works, equal to what are literally reported of *Jeſus*, not only to defeat us of all Diſtinction between true and falſe Miracles, which are the Object of our bodily Senſes, but to raiſe and keep up our Thoughts to the conſtant Contemplation of *Jeſus*'s ſpiritual, myſterious, and moſt miraculous Works, which are the Object of our Underſtandings, and loudly beſpeak the Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs of God; and which are to be the abſolute Demonſtration of *Jeſus*'s divine Authority and *Meſſiahſhip* to the Converſion of *Jews* and *Infidels*.

I have no more to do at preſent, but, like a *Moderator*, to conclude with a ſhort Addreſs and Exhortation to *Infidels* and

and *Apoſtates*, the two contending Parties in the preſent Controverſy. And

Firſt, To *Apoſtates*, I mean the Writers againſt the *Grounds* and *Scheme*. Whether you, *grave Sirs*, who account your ſelves Orthodox *Divines*, tho' there is little but Contradiction and Inconſiſtency amongſt you, do like the Name of *Apoſtates* which is given you, I much queſtion: But it is the propereſt, I could think of, for your Deſertion of primitive Doctrine about Prophecy and Miracles. I could, not improperly, have given you a worſe *Title*, but I was willing to compliment you, rather than reproach you with this.

But ſetting aſide the Title of *Apoſtates*, whether it be, in your Opinion, opprobrious or not; you may plainly perceive, that I am, *Sirs*, on your Side, as to the Truth of Chriſtianity; and if you'll acccept of my Aſſiſtance for the Proof of *Jeſus*'s Meſſiahſhip from Prophecy, upon the Terms of the allegorical Scheme, propoſed in my *Moderator*, you ſhall find me your hearty Abettor. Upon the allegorical Sheme, I don't doubt but we ſhall ſoundly drub and mawl *Infidels*, and beat them out of the Field of Battle. If you, being wedded to the literal Scheme, will not accept of my Aſſiſtance, you may go on in your own Way,

Way, and ſee the Event of the Controverſy, which in the End will turn to your Diſhonour.

You, *Sirs*, can't but be ſenſible, how thoſe two great Generals, Mr. *Grounds*, and Mr. *Scheme*, with their potent Armies of Reaſons and Authorities againſt your literal Prophecies, have grievouſly diſtreſs'd and gall'd you; and, if you don't make an honourable Retreat in time, and ſeek to *Allegoriſts* for Help, will gain a compleat Victory and Triumph over you.

Inſtead of the Help of *Allegoriſts*, you, I find, under the Diſappointment of your literal Scheme, chuſe rather to have Recourſe to *Jeſus*'s Miracles: But what little Dependence there is upon his Miracles, in your Senſe, I have *in part* proved in this *Diſcourſe*; and this I have done (give me leave repeatedly to declare it) not for the Service of your unbelieving Adverſaries, but to reduce you to the good old Way of interpreting Oracles, which, upon the Teſtimony of the Fathers, will one Day be the Converſion of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*.

Whether you, *Sirs*, will be pleas'd with this ſhort *Diſcourſe* on Chriſt's Miracles, I much queſtion. But before you put your ſelves in a Rage againſt it, I beg of you to read St. *Theophilus* of *Antioch*, *Origen*,

St.

St. *Hilary*, St. *Auguſtin*, St. *Ambroſe*, St. *Jerome*, St. *Chryſoſtom*, St. *John* of *Jeruſalem*, St. *Theophylact*, and other occaſional ancient Pieces on one Part or other of the *Evangeliſts*; and you'll find how they countenance ſuch a *Dicourſe* as this on Miracles, and will abundantly aſſiſt me in the Proſecution of it.

I expect, *Sirs*, that ſome of you will be ready to rave againſt me for this Diſcourſe; but this is my Comfort, that if your Paſſion ſhould ariſe to another Proſecution of me, you can't poſſibly ſeparate any of mine from the Opinions of the Fathers to ground a Proſecution on: And what Diſhonour in the End will redound to Proteſtant and pretendedly learned *Divines* of the Church of *England*, to perſecute again the Fathers for primitive Doctrine, I deſire you to think on.

But, as I ſuppoſe, you'll have more Wit, *Sirs*, than to proſecute me again for this *Diſcourſe*; ſo I hope you'll have more Ingenuity, than odiouſly (after your wonted manner) to repreſent me to the Populace, for Profaneneſs, Blaſphemy, and Infidelity. If you diſlike the whole or part of this Diſcourſe, appear like Men and Scholars, from the *Preſs* againſt it. Uſe me as roughly in Print as you think fit, I'll not take it ill.

Veniam

Veniam petimus, dabimusq; vicissim.

I desire nothing more than to be furiously attack'd from the *Press*, which, if I am not much mistaken, would give me a long'd for Opportunity to expose your Ignorance to more Advantage.

Be no longer mistaken, *good Sirs.* The History of *Jesus*'s Life, as recorded in the *Evangelists*, is an emblematical Representation of his spiritual Life in the Soul of Man; and his Miracles are Figures of his mysterious Operations. The four Gospels are in no Part a literal Story, but a System of mystical Philosophy or Theology.

If you are resolved not to come into this Opinion, I beg of you again, before you break forth into a Passion, to try to vindicate the literal Story of the three Miracles spoken to in this Discourse, *viz.* those of Jesus's *driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple; of his exorcising the Devils out of the Madman; and of his Transfiguration on the Mount;* which if you are able to defend against the Fathers, and my Objections, I'll give up the Cause to you, and own my self (what I am far enough from being) an impious Infidel and Blasphemer, and deserving the worst Punishment. In the mean time, I make bold

again to aſſert, that the literal Story of Chriſt's Life and Miracles, is an abſurd and incredible Romance, full of Contradictions and Inconſiſtencies; and that modern Paraphraſes are not only a conſequential Reflection on the Intellects of the *Evangeliſts*, and their divine Gifts of the Spirit, as if they could not write an intelligible and coherent Piece of Biography without your Help at this Diſtance of Time; but have even darken'd and obſcured the ſeemingly native Simplicity of the Story of the Life of *Jeſus*. So leaving you to chew upon this, I turn

My Addreſs to *Infidels*, particularly to the two moſt renown'd Writers of the Party, Mr. *Grounds*, and Mr. *Scheme*. I ſhould, *Gentlemen*, by right, ſalute you, with the Title of *Free-thinkers*, a proper Name for your philoſophical Sect, who are for the free Exerciſe of your Reaſon about divine and ſpeculative Points in Theology. And I had diſtinguiſh'd you by this Title from your apoſtatical Adverſaries, but that I had a mind to oblige my old Friends the *Clergy*, in giving you a no more honourable Title than I do them. And I truſt you will not be offended

fended at the Title of *Infidels*, ſince not only your Writings ſeem to have a Tendency to Infidelity; but, if there be any Fault in your Principles, you know how to charge it on your Adverſaries, the pretended Advocates for Chriſtianity, whoſe Abſurdities, falſe Reaſonings, Inconſiſtencies, and fooliſh Gloſſes on the Scriptures, have occaſioned your Departure from the Faith in Chriſt.

I thank Mr. *Scheme* for the noble Preſent of his Book, which I received and read with Pleaſure. But inſtead of one, he ſhould have ſent me a *Dozen* for the Uſe of Friends and Borrowers, who are very curious and importunate for the Peruſal of it. For what Reaſon he envies the *Bookſellers* the publick Sale of his Work, chuſing rather to give it away *gratis*, than that they ſhould reap any Profit by it, I know not. Surely it is not to bring an *Odium* on the *Clergy* for Perſecutors, as if ſuch an uſeful and philoſophical Piece might not appear publickly without Danger from them: If ſo, I hope the *Clergy* will reſent the Indignity, and invite him to a Publication of his Book, with a Promiſe of Impunity, which would wipe off the Reproach, which this clandeſtine Method of diſpoſing of it has caſt on them.

I once almoſt deſpair'd, *Sirs*, of ſeeing ſuch another Piece from your Quarter. I was afraid the Proſecution of the *Moderator* would have deterr'd you from the Preſs, whereby our excellent Controverſy on Foot muſt have been drop'd: But the ſudden and unexpected Appearance of Mr. *Scheme*, has revived me, and rejoiced the Cockles of my Heart. Go on then, *great Sirs*, in this Controverſy, which Mr. *Grounds* happily commenc'd; and if you are deny'd the Liberty of the Preſs, and publick Sale of your Books, I hope you'll, for all that, as occaſion offers it ſelf, oblige the Learned and Curious with ſome more of your bright Lucubrations, tho' you print them, and diſpoſe of them in this clancular and ſubtil Method.

It is not that I wiſh well to your Cauſe of Infidelity, that I thus encourage you. You have more Senſe and Reaſon, than to ſuſpect me tainted with unbelieving Principles. Chriſtianity will ſtand its Ground againſt your battering Armour; and the Church of Chriſt will be the more firmly eſtabliſh'd on a Rock of Wiſdom, for that Oppoſition you make to it. Tho' you will entirely vanquiſh the literal *Schemiſts*, and ride in Triumph over them, yet other Defenders of the Faith, call'd *Allegoriſts*,

goriſts, will ariſe to your Confutation and final Overthrow.

If I am not miſtaken, *Sirs*, your Adverſaries, the literal *Schemiſts*, whom I call *Apoſtates*, are about making a Retreat, and yielding the Field of Battle to you. The *Biſhop* of *Lichfield*, the greateſt General on their Side, will not only find it hard to levy any more Forces in Defence of his *twelve* literal Prophecies; but he knows that, if he draws his Sword any more againſt you, he muſt attack too the Authority of the Fathers for the allegorical Interpretation of ſome of thoſe Prophecies, already urg'd in my *Supplements* to the *Moderator*; or, if the Fathers are neglected by him, they and I, keeping out of the Reach of his *Bug-Bear*, will treat him with ſuch familiar Language, as never was given to one of his Order.

Mr. *Scheme* ſeems to promiſe us a Diſcourſe on the Miracles in the Scriptures; I hope he'll be as good as his Word, and e're long publiſh it. This Diſcourſe of mine can't poſſibly ſuperſede his. As I queſtion not but his Thoughts and Remarks on Miracles will be very conſiderable; ſo I ſhall be a little impatient till I ſee them. But be his Diſcourſe on Miracles

cles of what kind ſoever, I believe it will hardly be an Obſtruction to my Undertaking in hand, which I intend, by God's Leave, to go on with, to the Honour of the holy *Jeſus*, our ſpiritual *Meſſiah*, to whom be Glory and Praiſe for ever and ever. *Amen.*

FINIS.

BOOKS written by Mr. WOOLSTON, *and ſold by him, next Door to the* Star *in* Aldermanbury, *and by the Bookſellers of* London *and* Weſtminſter.

I. THE old Apology reviv'd, *&c.*

II. Diſſertatio de Pontii Pilati Epiſtola ad Tiberium circa Res Jeſu Chriſti geſtas.

III. Origenis Adamantii Epiſtolæ duæ circa Fidem vere orthodoxam & Scripturarum Interpretationem.

IV. The exact Fitneſs of the Time of Chriſt's Advent, demonſtrated by Reaſon, againſt the Objections of the old Gentiles, and modern Unbelievers.

V. Four Free-Gifts to the Clery, or Challenges to a Diſputation on this Queſtion, Whether the Hireling Prieſts of this Age, who are all Miniſters of the Letter, be not Worſhipers of the Apocalyptical Beaſt, and Miniſters of Anti-Chriſt.

VI. An Anſwer to the ſaid Four Free-Gifts.

VII. Two Letters to Dr. *Bennet*, on this Queſtion, Whether the People, call'd *Quakers*, do not the neareſt of any other Sect in Religion, reſemble the primitive Chriſtians in Principle and Practice.

VIII. An Anſwer to the ſaid two Letters.

IX. The Moderator between an Infidel and an Apoſtate: Or the Controverſy between the *Grounds* and his eccleſiaſtical Opponents, ſet in a clear Light, *&c.*

X. Two Supplements to the Moderator, *&c.*

XI. A Defence of the Miracle of the *Thundering Legion*, againſt a Diſſertation of *Walter Moyle*, Eſq;

XII. Six Diſcourſes on Miracles.

XIII. A Defence of the ſaid Diſcourſes.